DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 294 691 PS 017 373

AUTHOR Gnezda, Terry; Sonnier, Cate
TITLE Early Childhood Education: The Status of State Involvement.
INSTITUTION National Conference of State Legislatures, Denver, CO.
REPORT NO ISBN-1-55516-184-7
PUB DATE Jun 88
NOTE 16p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Council of State Legislatures, Book Order Department, 1050 17th Street, Suite 2100, Denver, CO 80265.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)
JOURNAL CIT State Legislative Report; v13 n16 Jun 1988

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Early Childhood Education; *Financial Support; Preschool Education; *State Aid; State Departments of Education; *State Government; *State Programs; Young Children

ABSTRACT

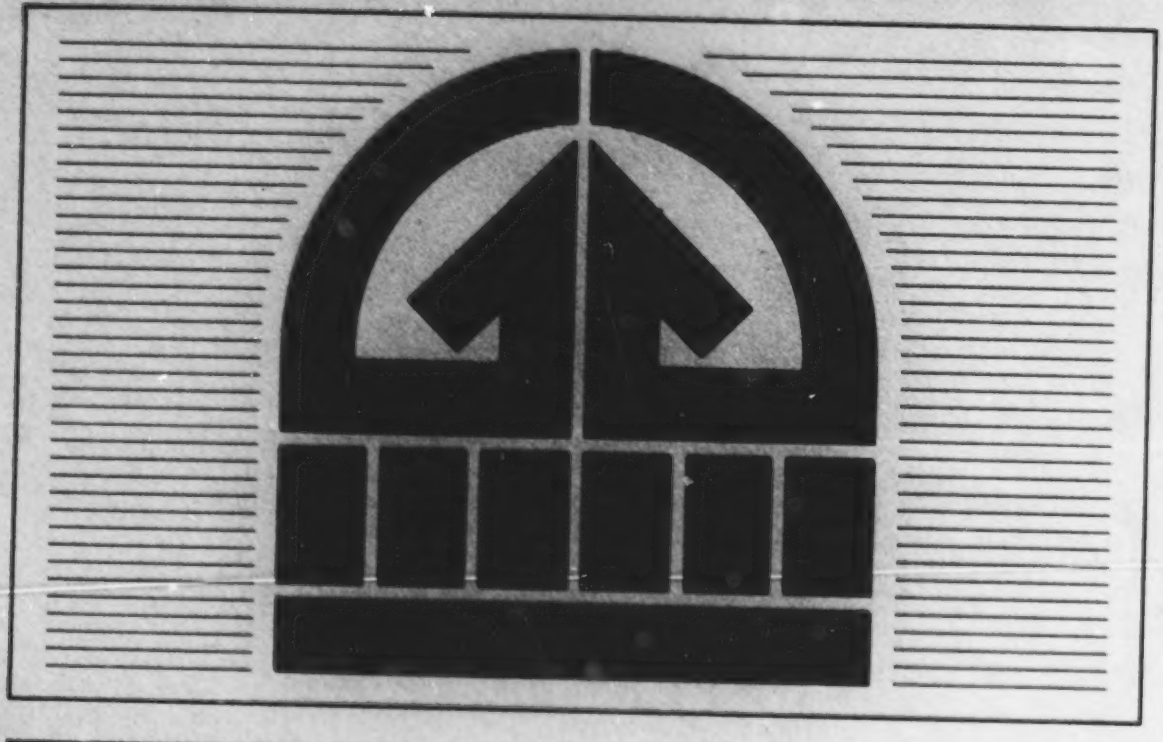
Examined in this report is the extent of interest in educational programs for preschool-age children during the 1980s. The introduction notes that 21 states spent state money on early childhood programs in 1987, and that the spending was in response to: (1) increased employment of mothers of young children; (2) research demonstrating the long- and short-term academic and social benefits of such programs; and (3) findings that suggest that spending on early childhood education can save a state $4 for every $1 spent. The report defines early childhood education programs, then details state commitments to early childhood education in terms of: (1) state dollars for early childhood education; (2) restrictions on state dollars for early childhood education; (3) children served; and (4) additional resources. Special program characteristics for various states are detailed with respect to the role of parents, curriculum approaches, and coordination of services. Also considered are linkages between state early childhood education programs and Head Start programs. The report concludes by pointing out that nearly half the states spend state money on early childhood education, and that the majority of state early childhood programs target 4-year-old children. Four references, an appendix listing state funding for early childhood education by state, and a description of the National Conference of State Legislatures Children, Youth, and Families Program wrap up the report. (SKC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED294691

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: THE STATUS OF STATE INVOLVEMENT

by

Terry Gnezda
Consultant

Cate Sonnier
Staff Associate

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Catherine Sonnier
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Vol. 13, No. 16 June 1988

An Information Service of the National Conference of State Legislatures
1050 17th Street, Suite 2100, Denver, Colorado 80265. William T. Pound, Executive Director

PS 017373

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORTS

"Emerging Issues: A Survey of Education Committee Chairs"
(Vol. 13, No. 3) (ISBN 1-55516-188-1) January 1988

"Child Care for State Employees: A 50-State Survey"
(Vol. 13, No. 4) (ISBN 1-55516-189-8) February 1988

"State Legislatures and the Liability Insurance Crisis: Chapter 2"
(Vol. 13, No. 5) (ISBN 1-55516-190-1) February 1988

"U.S. Department of Transportation Inconsistency Rulings
(Vol. 13, No. 6) (ISBN 1-55516-191-X) March 1988

"Survey of Interim Committee and Long-Term Research Studies"
(Vol. 13, No. 7) (ISBN 1-55516-192-8) April 1988

"Asbestos in Buildings: The State Role
(Vol. 13, No. 8) (ISBN 1-55516-193-6) April 1988

"The Private Sector and Public Transit: The Role of the States"
(Vol. 13, No. 9) (ISBN 1-55516-194-4) April 1988

"State Radon Programs: The Role of Legislation"
(Vol. 13, No. 10) (ISBN 1-55516-195-2) April 1988

"Restructuring Schools"
(Vol. 13, No. 11) (ISBN 1-55516-196-0) April 1988

"Teen-age Pregnancy Legislation in the States"
(Vol. 13, No. 12) (ISBN 1-55516-197-9) April 1988

"Inspection Procedures For Spent Nuclear Fuel and High-Level Radioactive Waste Truck Shipments
(Vol. 13, No. 13) (ISBN 1-55516-198-7) April 1988

"Overview of State-Supported Incubator Programs: A 1988 Update
(Vol. 13, No. 14) (ISBN 1-55516-199-5) May 1988

"Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act of 1987
(Vol. 13, No. 15) (ISBN 1-55516-200-2) May 1988

STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT is published 12 to 18 times. It is distributed without charge to legislative leaders, council and research directors, legislative librarians, and selected groups for each issue. For further information on STATE LEGISLATIVE REPORT or to obtain copies, contact the NCSL Book Order Department in Denver at 303/623-7800.

Copyright c 1988 by the National Conference of State Legislatures
ISBN 1-55516-184-7.

Early Childhood Education: The Status of State Involvement

INTRODUCTION

During the 1980s, state legislative interest in education programs for preschool-age children grew considerably; 21 states spent state money on these programs in 1987. To some extent, this heightened interest in early childhood education developed as a response to increased employment among mothers of young children and the growing number of children in poverty. However, the most significant factor influencing legislative support for early childhood education was research that demonstrated short- and long-term academic and social benefits to disadvantaged three and four-year-olds who were enrolled in early childhood education programs. These benefits included a reduced need for special education, lower dropout, delinquency and adolescent pregnancy rates, and less need for welfare in adulthood (1, 2, 3).

In addition, findings from other studies suggest that spending on early childhood education can save a state $4 for every $1 spent. Such an investment can result in decreased spending for special and remedial education, social welfare and criminal justice programs (4).

This State Legislative Report describes the status of state involvement in early childhood education programs. For the purposes of this report, early childhood education programs are defined as those that:

- Provide enriching educational experiences for pre-kindergarten children (usually aged three or four);
- Are designed primarily for groups of children located in center-based settings, including the public schools (although some may include home-based components); and
- Receive state money (funding may be totally from the state or a combination of state and other public and private money).

The definition **excludes** state programs that are designed as parent education programs, such as Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education Program and Missouri's Parents as Teachers Program, as well as state spending that merely supplements Head Start programs.

This State Legislative Report includes information from all 50 states on state funding, children served, special program characteristics and formal links between state early childhood education programs and federal Head Start programs. Data were collected in October 1987 by NCSL staff and appear in condensed form in Appendix A. *

---

* For more information, see "State Approaches to Early Childhood Education." SLR, Vol. 11, No. 14; and "State Fiscal Policies for Child Care and Early Childhood Education". SLR, Vol. 12, No. 7.

STATE COMMITMENTS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Although nearly half the states spend money on early childhood education, their commitment varies considerably. State spending provides an indication of the extent of a state's involvement in early childhood education, but it is not the only measure. Several secondary factors contribute to the state's broad policy framework for early childhood education. Among these are: statutory restrictions on state spending for early childhood education; children targeted or the extent of availability of early childhood education programs; and additional resources, including local matching funds, in-kind services and contributions, and other sources of state money to supplement direct early childhood education funding.

State Dollars for Early Childhood Education. State funding of early childhood education involves both the amount spent and the way the money is allocated. In October 1987, four states reported spending less than $1 million, six states reported spending $1 million to $10 million, three states reported spending $10 million to $20 million, and three states reported spending over $20 million on early childhood education programs for the period that included the 1987-88 school year. Several states were unable to provide spending levels because their allocations for early childhood education are incorporated into the total amounts distributed to school districts under the education budget.

States use various methods of dispersing early childhood education funds. Six states--Delaware, Maine, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Texas--allocate money to school districts based on school finance formulas. New York uses a categorical aid system to allocate early childhood education funds to school districts, and Nevada uses special education money for gifted children to support early childhood education. Louisiana distributes money to districts based on the number of programs to be funded. The most common method of funding early childhood education, however, is through grants or contracts awarded by a state administrative agency. In all cases except the state of Washington, this agency is the department of education. In Washington it is the Department of Community Development.

Twelve states award grants or contracts for early childhood education programs, most often through a competitive process. In general, school districts, private agencies or organizations with programs that are either approved by state boards of education or that meet statutory or regulatory program guidelines and requirements may receive grants. In many states eligible agencies and organizations include community-based child care and Head Start programs. Grants in some states, including Florida, Michigan and Ohio, are used for pilot programs.

California allocates half of its early childhood education grant money to public schools and half to other organizations. Washington awarded 11 of its 12 grants to Head Start programs and one to a day care program for children of migrant farm workers. In Oregon, competitive funds support start-up or maintenance costs of prekindergarten programs located in non-sectarian organizations, including schools. Maryland's approach differs from the other states that award grants. In Maryland, schools in which a specific number of third graders score at least six months below the norm in reading comprehension on California Achievement Tests are selected to receive grants

for early childhood education. Each school is required to submit a proposal and have it approved before receiving state money.

Vermont awards grants based on a formula that takes into account other available services and the extent of the low-income population in a local area. Vermont also stresses links between meeting early childhood education and day care needs. In 1987, Vermont awarded grants to school districts, day care centers and other private organizations. In one instance, a school district's money was used to pay tuition for children in the district to attend child care in the community.

Restrictions on State Dollars for Early Childhood Education. Of the states spending state funds on early childhood education, some face statutory limitations on how that money may be spent. Florida prohibits the use of early childhood education money for initial construction costs, while Maryland's money is specifically intended for staff salaries and staff overhead costs. In Ohio, the state is restricted from spending general revenue money on preschool programs.

Children Served. None of the 50 states offer universal early childhood education for all preschool children, and the majority of states target their programs to "at-risk" four-year-olds. Definitions of "at-risk" differ among the states, but generally include children who are low income and economically disadvantaged, deficient in English, and who are identified as having academic difficulties or who may potentially fail in school.

Eleven states target low-income children for early childhood education programs. In California, children from families whose income is up to 60 percent of the state's median income are eligible for early childhood education programs; Oregon targets children who would be eligible for Head Start, but who are not currently being served. Massachusetts designates 75 percent of its grant money for low-income areas; 90 percent of the children in New York's early childhood education programs must demonstrate economic need. Texas targets both economically disadvantaged and English deficient children; Louisiana, South Carolina and West Virginia target children who are likely to fail readiness tests for public schools. As mentioned earlier, Maryland targets schools whose students demonstrate poor scores on achievement tests rather than targeting specific populations of children.

Delaware, Maine, New Jersey, Ohio and Pennsylvania do not target specific groups of children for their early childhood education programs. In these states, eligibility is determined by the child's age and the availability of programs in the local area. For example, Ohio funds eight pilot programs using urban, rural and suburban models serving three- and four-year-old children.

Additional Resources. Several states require that state money be matched with local or federal money or in-kind services. New York requires an 11 percent local match, while New Jersey and Texas require matches based on the economic conditions of the school districts. Maine provides partial reimbursement to school districts after the districts have funded their programs locally for two years. Maryland requires local schools to contribute an in-kind match or to use federal Chapter I money to cover some operating costs, including transportation and facilities. In other states, such as Massachusetts and Vermont, grant applications receive priority if the potential grantee

demonstrates the availability of local resources to support state funding. Maine provides additional grants to early childhood education programs specifically to improve program quality.

SPECIAL PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

Although each state's early childhood education program differs, an analysis points to an emerging set of special characteristics that may set early childhood education apart from the traditional primary and secondary educational model. These characteristics relate to the role of parents in early childhood education, define specific curriculum approaches, and encourage coordination of services to young children.

Role of Parents. Seven states, California, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York and Oklahoma, include a parent involvement component as part of their programs. Although the specifics of these components may be locally determined, it is significant that parents are considered an integral part of the state early childhood education policy.

Curriculum Approaches. California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York and Ohio specify that their early childhood education programs reflect a "developmentally appropriate" curriculum. Essentially, the curriculum is based on normal developmental characteristics of preschool-age children so that learning occurs within a context corresponding to the child's abilities and maturity level. Theoretically, this provides preschool-age children with a learning environment that is consistent with their needs. It further ensures that their experiences are not merely based on curriculum models used with older children in primary grades.

Coordination of Services. The scope of services with which early childhood education is coordinated varies among the states. Massachusetts stresses coordination of early childhood education programs with services for special needs children and other community services, including day care. Vermont emphasizes coordination between school districts and local day care services in the implementation of its early childhood education programs, and Washington encourages connections with Head Start and other supportive services agencies.

Although not necessarily identifying specific methods of interagency cooperation or coordination, California, New York, Oregon, South Carolina and Washington approach early childhood education from a comprehensive perspective similar to that of federal Head Start programs. Early childhood education programs in these states include nutrition, health care and social and intellectual development components.

LINKAGES BETWEEN STATE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND HEAD START

It is not unusual for state early childhood education programs to be perceived as competing with federal Head Start programs. Both often target the same population, and, therefore, some policymakers question the need for the states to invest in early childhood education. However, in March 1988, the Head Start Bureau estimated that only between 16 percent to 20 percent of the eligible population is being served. Clearly, many children who could benefit from early childhood programs are not being reached.

Proponents of Head Start also express concern over the expansion of state early childhood education programs, and suggest that it would be inappropriate for state programs to replace Head Start. Part of their concern is related to the differences that commonly exist between state early education programs and Head Start. As mentioned earlier, Head Start provides children with comprehensive services that include educational components. In general, state programs focus on educational experiences and have a more limited scope than Head Start. If coordinated within the state, state early childhood education programs and Head Start programs could support each other and provide early childhood education to many more young children.

Less than half the states have either formal or informal links between their early childhood education programs and Head Start. The linkages that do exist usually take one of three forms. In California, Vermont and Washington, early childhood education grants may be awarded to Head Start programs. In Illinois and New York, the states can subcontract early childhood education programs to Head Start; and in Florida and Oklahoma, Head Start representatives act as advisers to the state early childhood education programs.

As an alternative, or in addition to state early childhood education programs, several states provide direct state money to supplement Head Start. These states include Alaska, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Washington.

CONCLUSIONS

Nearly half of the states spend state money on early childhood education programs, which is usually allocated either through grants or contracts or directly to school districts as part of the school finance formula. In many states, state money for early childhood education is supplemented by local resources, which is sometimes necessary because of statutory restrictions on state spending for these programs.

The majority of state early childhood education programs target four-year-old children who, because of economic disadvantage, English-language deficiency or other reasons, are considered "at-risk" for academic difficulties. In general, the programs focus on education and few provide a comprehensive array of services comparable to federal Head Start programs.

Legislative support for early childhood education is likely to continue to grow. It is expected that future initiatives will address new strategies to increase funding for early childhood education, and effective methods for reducing costs of programs through coordination with other similar services in local areas, such as child care and Head Start. Program quality is also expected to receive greater attention in the states, with an increased emphasis on parent involvement and developmentally appropriate curriculum models.

REFERENCES

1. Schweinhart, Lawrence J. The Preschool Challenge. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High Scope Education Research Foundation, 1985.

2. Consortium for Longitudinal Studies. Lasting Effects After Preschool, Final Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.

3. ----------. Persistence of Preschool Effects: Status, Stress and Coping Skills, Final Report. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.

4. Barnett, W. Steven. The Perry Preschool Program and Its Long-Term Effects: A Cost Benefit Analysis. Ypsilanti, Michigan: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 1985.

APPENDIX A

STATES FUNDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION*

State	Funding Level	Funding Methods	No. of Children Served	Required Local Match	Target Group	Special Characteristics	Head Start Link
California	$36,000,000	Grants	19,000	No	Low income (60% SMI)	Parent involvement/development component	Yes
Delaware	189,000	School finance formula	100	No	None	Parent involvement	No
Florida	1,670,000	Grants	N/A	No	Educationally/economically disadvantaged	Developmental component/staff development/district advisory council	Yes
Illinois	12,100,000	Grants	7,000	No	Low income/risk of academic failure/low birth weight/limited English/teen parents	Parent involvement/considering NAEYC guidelines	Yes
Louisiana	1,700,000	Allocates to school districts	1,272	No	Predicted school unreadiness	Parent involvement/developmentally appropriate	No
Maine	N/A	School finance formula	155	No	None		No

* Estimates of numbers of children served in each state appear in Appendix A. These figures do not provide a clear indication of the extent to which the programs serve the intended populations. Data indicating the overall sizes of the targeted groups in each state and the proportion served are unavailable.

State	Funding Level	Funding Method	No. of Children Served	Required Local Match	Target Group	Special Characteristics	Head Start Link
Maryland	$ 3,295,000	Grants	3,000	Yes In-kind	Schools with low-reading comprehension scores	Local control	No
Massachusetts	$10,350,000	Grants	N/A	No	Low income	Parental component/ Developmental component/ Coordinated approach/ Local advisory councils	Yes
Michigan	1,000,000	Grants	694	No	Education-ally/eco-nomically disadvan-taged	Collaborative models with private day care (7 out of 16)	No
Nevada	N/A	Special Education Dollars	N/A	No	Gifted 4 year olds		No
New Jersey	$6,994,744	School finance formula	5,790	Some-times	None		
New York	27,000,000	Cate-gorical aid	12,000	11% cash match	Economically disadvan-taged	Parent involve-ment/small class size	Yes
Ohio	256,767	Grants	N/A	No	None		No
Oklahoma	N/A	Grants	13,000	No	None	Parent involve-ment	Yes

State	Funding Level	Funding Method	No. of Children Served	Required Local Match	Target Group	Special Characteristics	Head Start Link
Oregon	$1,067,189 (biennium)	Grants	N/A	No	Eligible for Head Start; not currently served	Coordination of services	Yes
Pennsylvania	N/A	School finance formula	N/A	Yes	None	Local control	No
South Carolina	8,255,924	School finance formula	8,451	Some-times	Predicted school un-readiness	Local control	No
Texas	46,200,000	School finance formula	48,307	Some-times	Economically disadvan-taged/ English deficient	Some districts mandated to offer pre-kindergarten/ statewide imple-mentation	Yes
Vermont	500,000	Grants	293	No	Low income/ non-English/ socially dis-advantaged	Cooperation be-tween school districts and day care	Yes
Washington	12,600,000 (biennium)	Grants	2,000 (projected)	No	Low income	Administered by Department of Community Development/ Interagency cooperation	Yes
West Virginia	540,000	Contracts	N/A	No	Low income	Diversity of locations	No

National Conference of State Legislatures
Children, Youth, and Families Program

The Children, Youth, and Families Program of the National Conference of State Legislatures is designed to meet the needs of state legislatures in developing policy and programs related to children and families. The following services are available at no cost to legislators and staff:

- *information clearinghouse*
- *research assistance*
- *publications*
- *technical assistance*

Technical assistance includes testimony at committee hearings, briefing sessions for state legislators and their staffs, and bill drafting and analysis. Resources and expertise are provided by NCSL staff, national experts, and legislators.

Project Areas

Child Care/Early Childhood Education. *Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the project facilitates coordinated policymaking between legislators who work on child care issues in human services committees and those who work on education issues in education committees. The project assists state legislators in developing coordinated programs to meet child care and early education needs. Technical assistance is a major project commitment, including: planning and strategizing meetings with legislators, legislative staff, and professionals in the public and private sector; on-site delivery of assistance through hearings, briefings, workshops, or seminars; and evaluation meetings.*

Child Support Enforcement. *With the growing number of single-parent families, state and federal laws protecting these families' rights in establishment of paternity, child support orders, and enforcement of support and visitation are important public policy considerations. The project, under contract with the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, assists lawmakers in developing child support public policy, including: program analysis, assistance in interpreting and drafting laws per federal compliance issues; and assessing inter- and intrastate child support enforcement, custody, visitation, and paternity establishment legislation.*

Child Welfare. *Through a grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Child Welfare Project assists state legislators in improving state child welfare systems. State child welfare systems are the primary means by which states meet the needs of abused and neglected children. Foster care or out-of-home placement is the most expensive form of child welfare service and the most traumatic for the child. With the recent explosion of abuse and neglect reports, state child welfare systems are experiencing enormous stress. Consequently, many states are exploring service alternatives. Services to prevent out-of-home care, to reunify families, and to provide adoption and other placement alternatives have become major components of the child welfare system. Technical assistance is available to legislators in a variety of areas to improve services, to assist states in complying with the federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (P.L. 96-272), and to evaluate administration and financing mechanisms.*

Teen Pregnancy. *The Teenage Pregnancy Project, funded by the Ford Foundation, provides state legislators and legislative staff with information and resources from state experience related to teenage pregnancy and parenting. Major project activities are to provide on-site technical assistance to three states each year, produce three publications annually, operate an information clearinghouse, participate in a national advisory committee, and contribute to the NCSL Annual Meeting.*

For more information, call or write Shelley Smith, Program Manager, Children, Youth, and Families Program, National Conference of State Legislatures, 1050 Seventeenth Street, Suite 2100, Denver, Colorado 80265, (303) 623-7800